

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
JUNE 28, 2021
C14H-2010-0009; HR-2021-041008
VOSS HOUSE
1501 NORTHWOOD ROAD

PROPOSAL

Construct a rear and second-level addition.

PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

- 1) Demolish detached garage.
- 2) Construct a rear addition. The addition extends the back corner of the house by 5'-1" to the south and 8'-5 ½" to the west. Another building, 16'-5" by 25'-2", is connected by an open porch in a dog-trot configuration. The additions have cross-gabled, standing-seam metal roofs and are clad in horizontal wood siding. Windows are 1:1 light and are of similar size and proportions to the windows on the house. Windows and doors opening onto the porch are steel-framed.
- 3) Construct a second-story addition to the house. The addition consists of a shed-roofed dormer on the west roof slope and a side-gabled volume near the back of the house, set back from the Harris Blvd. (east) side. These elements also have standing-seam metal roofing and horizontal wood siding. Windows are 1:1 light, arranged singly or in groupings, and are of similar or smaller size but the same proportions as the windows on the house.

ARCHITECTURE

The Voss House faces Northwood Road; however, the following description from the landmark nomination considers the Harris Blvd. side as the primary elevation. The house is a one-story, rectangular-plan, side-gabled frame bungalow with a partial-width front-gabled independent porch on battered posts and stone piers with a brick cap and a vertical baluster railing. Fenestration consists of 1:1 wood-frame, wood-sash units in single and multiple configurations; the entry is flanked with sidelights. A battered stone chimney pierces the north side gable of the house.

The garage is not mentioned in the landmark nomination. It has a low-pitched pyramidal roof and is clad in board-and-batten siding. The garage is located to the southwest of the house at the rear corner of the property, with a modern overhead garage door facing Harris Blvd. While the 1961 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows a garage at the same location, it has a different footprint. Building permits show the garage was remodeled in 2000, though the description indicates installation of a concrete slab and interior remodel only.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW

The City of Austin's Historic Design Standards (March 2021) are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and are used to evaluate projects at historic landmarks. The following standards apply to the proposed project:

Repair and alterations

10.1 Whenever possible, retain and repair existing historic accessory buildings.

The project entails demolition of the garage, which is of undetermined age. The dog-trot portion of the rear addition is a compatible replacement in terms of its scale and location on the site.

Residential additions

1.1 Locate additions to the rear and sides of historic buildings to minimize visual impact.

The ground-level addition is at the back (southwest) corner of the property and is recessed when viewed from the front or side street. The second-story addition is also set back significantly from the sides and front of the house.

1.2 Step back side additions from the front wall a distance that preserves the shape of the historic building from the primary street.

The rear addition extends past the west side of the house. Given the location at the back corner of the house, it will be minimally visible from Northwood Road.

1.3 If an addition adds a story to the historic building, set it back from the front wall to minimize visual impact. (b) If the historic building has a front-gabled, flat, or shed roof form, set the addition back from the front wall the greater of 15' or one-half of the width of the front wall.

The shed-roofed dormer on the west side is set back 30' from the Northwood Road (north) elevation, equal to the overall house width. The side-gabled portion of the second-story addition is set back even more appreciably.

1.4 For corner properties, set back the addition to align with or behind the front setback of the adjacent building fronting on that street.

The rear addition meets this standard, as it is recessed considerably from the Harris Blvd. (east) side of the house, which has a similar setback as the house across the alley.

1.5 Minimize the loss of historic fabric by connecting additions to the existing building through the least possible invasive location and means.

The rear addition minimally engages with the back corner of the house. It will result in removal of paired windows on the west elevation and one out of a grouping of four windows on the south elevation. The second-story addition will involve modification of the roof and roof framing.

1.6 Additions are not appropriate for all historic landmarks and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

The Voss house is significant for its architecture and association with Herman F. Voss, founder of the H. H. Voss Company, which handled wholesale and retail hardware, glassware, stoves, and hotel supplies. It is a good example of a Craftsman-style bungalow. The proposed additions and alterations maintain the significant architectural features of the house. The second-floor addition is pulled back significantly, where it does not compete with the distinctive porch and stone chimney on the north façade and leaves a long expanse of the east-facing roof slope uninterrupted.

2.1 Design an addition to complement the scale and massing of the historic building, including height. The addition must appear subordinate to the historic building.

The second-floor addition will increase the height of the roofline at the rear of the house but does not add a full story, as much of the usable space is captured from the existing attic. Its small size is subordinate to the historic building.

2.2 (b) Minimize the appearance of the addition from the street faced by the historic building's front wall. The historic building's overall shape as viewed from the street must appear relatively unaltered.

The second-floor addition is set back from the front and side elevations. Though visible from the side street, its location and size minimally impact the east-facing roof slope.

3.1 Design additions to be compatible with and differentiated from the historic building, if they are visible from the street.

The addition's form, massing, roof pitch, materials, and fenestration are compatible with the historic house but do not appear to be historic features.

3.3 If adding dormers to the roof of a historic building, do not locate them on front-facing slopes. Minimize their location, size, and scale on sidefacing slopes.

The shed-roofed dormer on the west elevation is not in a prominent location and is of a reasonable size and scale.

4.1 If an addition will be visible from a street on the front or side, design its roof form and slope to complement the roof on the historic building.

The roof pitch and forms of the second-floor and rear additions are similar to that of the existing house.

4.2 Use roof materials that match or have similar color, texture, and other visual qualities as the roof on the historic building.

Metal roofing is noted as an alteration to the house in the landmark nomination. The additions will also have standing-seam metal roofing.

5.1 If an addition will be visible from a street on the front or side, use exterior wall materials that are compatible with those on the historic building, as well as with the character of the district, in scale, type, material, size, finish, and texture.

The addition will be clad in horizontal wood siding matching that on the historic house.

5.2 Differentiate the exterior wall materials of the addition from those of the historic building. This could be accomplished by using different materials, using the same materials with different dimensions, or changing trim type or dimensions.

While the cladding will match the historic house, the additions will be differentiated by use of narrower window trim and plain rather than decorative bargeboards.

6.1 If an addition will be visible from a street on the front or side, use windows that are compatible with those on the existing building in terms of material, fenestration pattern, size, proportion, configuration, and profile.

The fenestration patterns are compatible with the historic house.

The proposed additions are compatible, respect the design of the historic street-facing elevations, and result in limited removal of historic fabric. The project meets the applicable standards.

COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

At their April 26, 2021 meeting, the Commission postponed the public hearing and referred the case to the Architectural Review Committee (ARC). At the May ARC meeting, Committee members expressed concern regarding multiple aspects of the project and the extent to which the design would modify a historic landmark on a corner lot. The second-story addition was described as encroaching on the one-story feeling of the landmark, and the long span of the side dormer as drawing attention to itself. Committee members recommended lowering the height of the addition and/or pushing it towards the rear of the house as much as possible. Alternately, members suggested a two-story addition with a hyphen at the rear of the property. The applicant explained that the rear addition has been designed around a large pecan tree in the back yard. Committee members also recommended retention of the grouping of four double-hung windows on the rear elevation, rather than installation of a large metal window. The applicant argued that the rear elevation appears to be a porch enclosure, rather than original to the house, and is not highly visible from the side street.

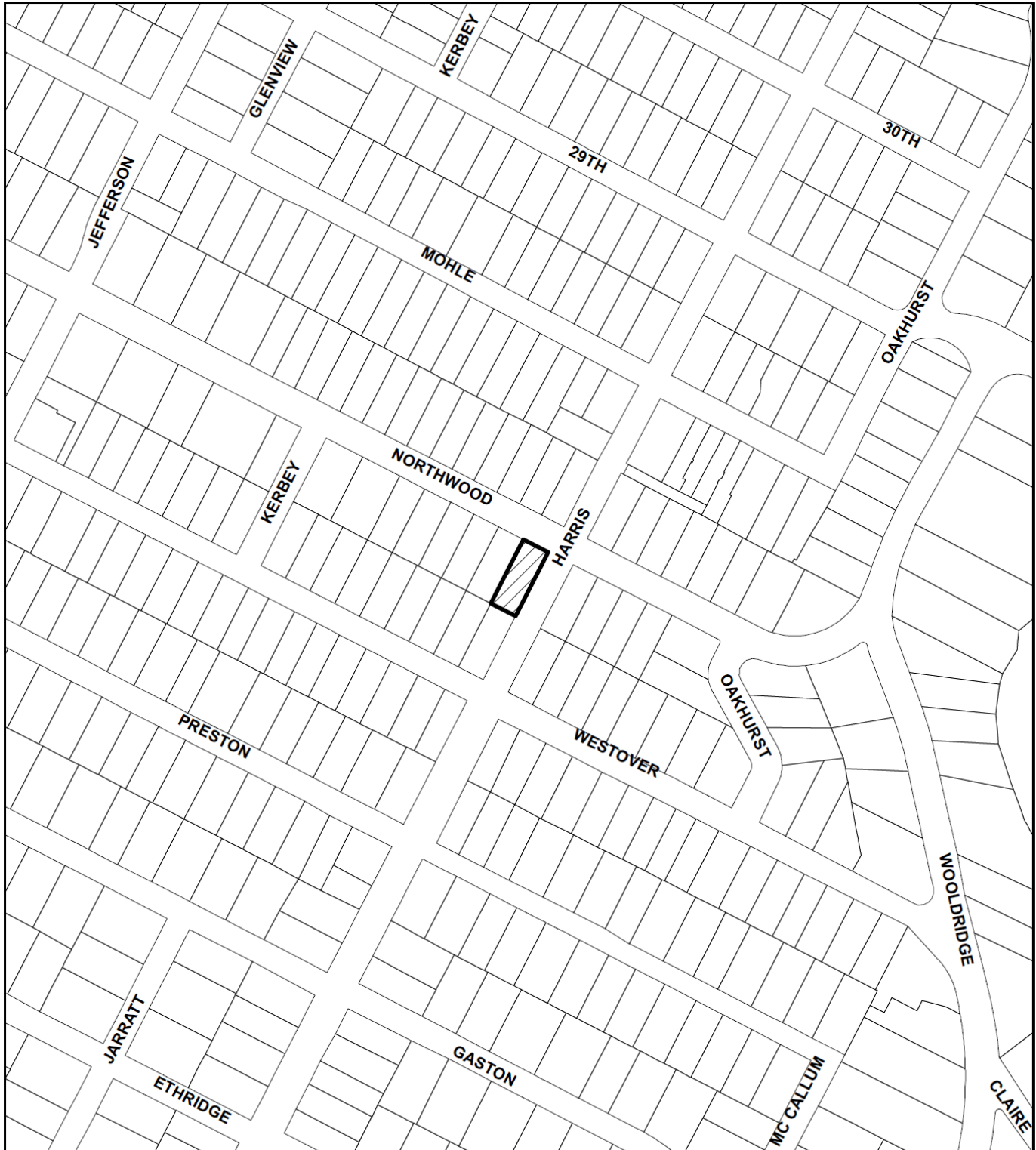
At the June ARC, the applicant presented an updated design that addresses prior feedback. Committee members indicated that the new proposal better respects the form and design of the historic house. Changes include significantly reducing the size of the second-story addition and retaining three of the four grouped windows on the rear elevation. The applicant asked to revisit the large window from the prior design; committee members indicated that the enclosed porch may be a historic-age alteration, and the house in its entirety was designated as a landmark. Committee members suggested retaining or salvaging the windows to be removed at the rear addition.

The design presented for Commission approval is unchanged from the June Committee meeting.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Approve the application.

LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HR 21-041008

LOCATION: 1501 NORTHWOOD ROAD



1" = 250'

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Photos



*North and east elevations, view from corner of Northwood Rd. and Harris Blvd.
Photograph provided by applicant.*



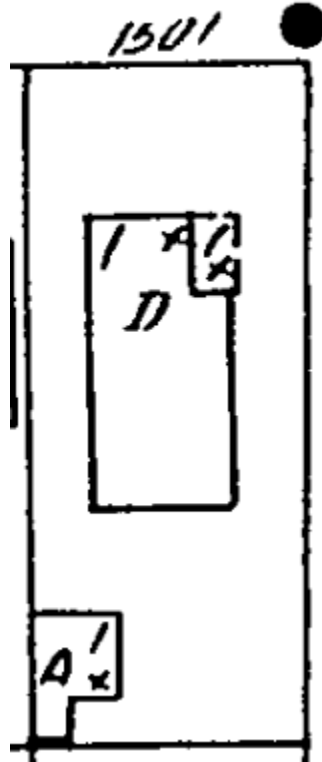
North elevation, view from Northwood Rd. Photograph provided by applicant.



South elevation of house and east elevation of garage. Photograph provided by applicant.



West elevation of house and north elevation of garage. Photograph provided by applicant.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1501 Northwood Rd., vol. 1, 1935-1961, sheet 56.